

State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia

Summary of Findings and Recommendation: Commission Charter Application for Expedited Review

School: Georgia Connections Academy

Georgia Connections Academy was approved as a Commission charter school in 2010, but transitioned to and opened as a State Chartered Special School in 2011.

The mission of Georgia Connections Academy is to “establish a statewide, collaborative school community spanning grades K – 12 where all stakeholders believe that all students can learn and must learn at relatively high levels of achievement.”

Attendance Zone: Statewide - Virtual

Grade Levels Served: Kindergarten—Grade 12

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Charter School Commission **approve** a charter for the Georgia Connections Academy for a five-year term to run from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2018.

Summary of Findings: Academics (Educational Plan)

Georgia Connections Academy Charter School contracts with Connections Academy of Georgia (CA) to offer a virtual K-12 curriculum aligned to the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards.

The Charter School delivers its curriculum through technology-enhanced learning methods that maximize student interest. Students view Teachlets, short-length interactive tutorials that showcase the skills to be mastered prior to the lesson, and they interact with other groups of students over web-conferencing for studying. Assessment occurs regularly, and students are held accountable for their respective personal learning plans and guided daily by a designated learning coach.

Georgia Connections Academy has established rigorous performance-based goals and measurable objectives designed to improve student achievement that directly relate to increased performance on the CRCTs, EOCTs, and the GHSWT. These academic goals and objectives include achieving standards that exceed those of the state. Georgia Connections Academy has also established goals related to daily attendance, fiscal feasibility and governing board effectiveness.

In 2011-2012, Georgia Connections Academy experienced mixed academic results on state assessments; however, more data is required to assess capacity as 2011-2012 was the first year of operation. Additionally, the school has implemented strategies aimed at improving academic results (including professional development for teachers and remediation/interventions for students).

Capacity (Organizational Plan)

Georgia Connections Academy's governing board is comprised of highly qualified individuals with a diversity of skill sets and experience in education, law, and finance that manage the schools relationship with Connections Academy, LLC. The governing board has shown independence and diligence in the negotiations between Connections and the board as represented in the management agreement.

Significant Changes from Previous Charter

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, enrollment expansion in a virtual school is contingent on the school's ability to meet contracted performance requirements. Maximum enrollment in the first

year of the charter term will be capped at a specified enrollment level. Each subsequent year, the school may increase enrollment only if it meets annual contracted performance goals.

All academic goals have been updated to reflect the state-wide change in federal accountability. New goals are aligned with the state performance targets and the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).

Additional Assurances:

Georgia Connections Academy currently holds a charter in good standing as determined by the State Board of Education.

Georgia Connections Academy completed GaDOE's full petition review process (requesting either approval or renewal) within the last year in anticipation of shifting authorizers in Spring 2013, and the school received a recommendation for approval or renewal by GaDOE staff based on progress and performance.